

Red additions to this template are from discussions during the first Lowland Focus Work Group meeting on July 22, 2009.

- Please edit these additions as needed.
- Add your name to appropriate line under the first question.
- Add your thoughts to any/all questions and submit to: Annette.Mansheim@rio.iowa.org.
- Comments will be compiled re-distribute.

Water Resources Coordinating Council Work Group Recommendation Template

HF 756 requires the WRCC to “develop recommendations for policies and funding promoting a watershed management approach to reduce the adverse impact of future flooding on this state's residents, businesses, communities, and soil and water quality” and to submit these recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly by 11/15/09. The following template will be used by the four WRCC work groups in making recommendations to ensure that the requirements of the legislation are met and to aid in determining best implementation of recommendations.

Fill in the box indicating the focus of this recommendation. Place an X in the box of any other areas affected by the recommendation.

- ☐ 1. Flood plain management and regulation
- ☐ 2. Lowland focus: Wetland protection, restoration and construction; and conservation easements and other land management
- ☐ 3. Upland Focus: Perennial ground cover and other agricultural conservation practices; and permanent or temporary water retention structures
- ☐ 4. Promulgation and implementation of statewide storm water management standards; and pervious pavement, bioswales, and other urban conservation practices

Who has been consulted regarding this proposal? List:

- ☐ 1. hydrological experts_____
- ☐ 2. land use experts_____
- ☐ 3. city representatives_____
- ☐ 4. county representatives_____

- ☐ 5. drainage and levee districts_____
- ☐ 6. agricultural interests_____
- ☐ 7. soil and water conservation districts_____
- ☐ 8. urban and regional planning experts_____
- ☐ 9. other_____

What resources and reports have been reviewed in considering this proposal? List:
 (Many resource documents will be located on the RIO website. Link below:
<http://www.rio.iowa.gov/wrcc/index.html>

- 2001 Iowa Watershed Taskforce Report, IDALS
- Green Paper: Recovering from the Storms, Planning for the Future: A Safer, Smarter, Stronger Iowa, Rebuild Iowa Office
- NRCS Wetland Conservation Easements Map – Iowa as of July 1, 2009
- 2008 State of Iowa Maps (3)
 - County WRP Easements
 - County ERP Easements
 - County EWRP Easements
- Farm Bill 2008:
 - At a Glance Wetlands Reserve Program
 - At a Glance Grassland Reserve Program
 - Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (under utilized in Iowa)

Were examples identified of what is working well in the State of Iowa regarding this issue? Specify.

- State conservation wetland banking program provides compensation in the form of tax credits to alter a regulated wetland area. Often this is old oxbows in the Prairie Pothole area.
- Integrated Wetland Drainage Program shows a high level of technical success. Around 50 in projects in place and 70 in process. Need additional land owners to participate by making land available. Often these are 40 to 60-acre sites.

Were areas identified where improvements could be made? Specify.

- Data collection and analysis to identify and prioritize potential hazard areas. “Frontier Analysis,” an economic model relating to flood plain ranking/land use/planning was described.
 - Roadblock: past flooding is not always the best indicator of future flooding.

- Need to link federal money to planning but often the process is slow and not always effective.
- Purchase of easements in flood plains. A lack of permanent vegetation allowed for massive amounts of soil to be moved downstream which creates a massive and costly clean-up effort. Can we pick strategic upstream areas to manage for the purpose of keeping sediment out of rivers?
- Iowa has 3,000 drainage districts with failing design. With over 6 million acres of land we need the most cost-effective way to put into wetland.
- Flood plain easements are just another tool to manage flood plains. We need a big toolbox with lots of tools.
- A permanent wetland area with proper vegetation can serve as an impoundment area; it will hold and absorb water.

Were examples of best practices identified from the local or regional level in Iowa, or in other states, that should be considered for statewide implementation in Iowa?

- In Indiana they shut down tile drains to hold water in the fields. Used during floods and during drought.

Outline how improvements can be made without legislative action.

- Good quality grazing programs and plant diversity would require no legislation.
- Grass Banks
- DOT has a program that allows lowland to be farmed with the agreement that if there is flooding the land will be used for back up and holding water.

If legislation is needed, would it establish new law or revise existing law? (specify Code sections when possible)

How would this proposal impact Iowans in a positive or negative way?

- Negative: There is resistance to any legislation or action that results in reduced agricultural production.

What agencies does this proposal affect?

Is this issue similar to any legislation that was filed in the past? What was the outcome?

Are there interest groups or associations that support or oppose this proposal or will present similar proposals themselves?

Funding considerations:

- Multi-year state fiscal impact (please be as specific as possible, including tax credits and any FTE adjustments).
- Also, please identify funding source (General Fund or other funds),
- whether the proposal includes one-time costs or multi-year costs,

- and whether there are operating expenditures:

Other Notes from 7/22/09 meeting:

- Rich Sims, NRCS, wants to put together a plan for flood plain management program for Iowa. Started to discuss how to go about a state-wide assessment of Iowa to identify where priority areas are to invest time/funds in planning and flood plain management. When those areas are identified, show how to optimize economic and environmental to optimize public investment. Local planning and zoning, agricultural practices, detailed planning. Make investment decisions based upon (ranking flood plain area for the services they provide us)
- Mitigation banks – USCAE wants like-kind of mitigation in each HUC 8.
- A flood plain is an indicator of where the problems are but the flood plain is not the problem.
- Floods in Iowa over last 10 – 12 years have become dramatically more destructive.
- Consider the physical aspects of flooding. We are seeing a higher frequency of heavy rain events in Iowa. The water comes off the landscape way too fast. The water-holding capacity of our soil is decreasing over time. We have more clay soil, less organic soil. We have lost a lot of topsoil. Old oxbows where the rivers used to connect to its flood plain can be used again.
 - Water in Cedar River in Cedar Rapids came up really fast and left really fast. It was not stored. With high value assets along the river this is a problem. This could reoccur. **Keeping water on the landscape is probably the number one thing that we can do.** This helps keeps pollutants out of streams.
 - Early 1800s there was 5,000 to 6,000 miles of streams and rivers, now there are 72,000 miles of streams and rivers.
 - Increased channeling happened over a 20 year period largely due trenching in early 1800's.
 - Legislature will react to high-value targets like Cedar Rapids.
 - There is a way to strike a balance between protection of high quality soil and agriculture and still be an agricultural state and protect our high value targets.
 - Key words to focus on when considering policy development:
 - Impounding?
 - Retention?
 - “hold water where it falls” – a strategy identified in the Green Paper
 - We can control how water interacts with the landscape.
- Over time there is a percentage of time when some land cannot be used to grow crops because it will be under water. It is a tradeoff – if that land is not underwater then some other place will be.
- Most streams in Iowa are under our control – not much comes from Minnesota. We send a lot to Missouri.
- We need to present to the legislature some series of options for doing that (holding water where it falls). Pitfall is if it is a volunteer program. We do need to purchase land (eminent domain) acquire property to use for flood mitigation.
- How would it fly to enact conservation easement that regulates farming with conservation practices, adding cover crops, contouring, and other practices that retain water and release slowly? This would be telling farmers how to farm and would not go well.
 - Stay out of regulatory and concentrate on voluntary programs.
 - We did not secure enough federal funding to acquire marginal lands. Need to do better planning. We have interest in voluntary easement programs but do not have funding. We have an opportunity now
- Can we stop subsidizing bad behavior? Let's stop development in flood plains and stop certain types of agricultural practices in the flood plain. Charge fee to cover the risk of what they are doing.